

City of Decorah
Planning and Zoning Commission
July 13, 2020 – 7:00pm
Meeting Minutes

Electronic meeting pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8 – In circumstances where such a meeting is impossible or impractical due to concerns about COVID-19 and social distancing for the safety of commission members and the public.

In support of Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds' proclamation declaring a State of Public Health Disaster Emergency in Iowa, the current COVID-19 situation makes it "impossible and impractical" to meet in one location. Due to this the Decorah City Hall was partially closed to the public for the July 13, 2020 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. Seating was limited to ensure distancing. The public was invited to participate via electronic means.

Members present included: Nathan Thompson, Ryan Delaney, Jared Essa, Tony Clarke, Barbara Massman, and Joel Zook.

There is one seat vacant on the commission effective June 1, 2020

Others present: Zoning Administrator / City Manager Chad Bird. There were ten citizens logged into the Zoom platform.

Consider approval of minutes from the June 8, 2020 regular meeting

Motion by Massman and second by Zook to approve the minutes from the June 8, 2020 regular meeting.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design Review re: 418 West Water Street, *Northeast Montessori School – install a prefabricated storage shed*

Bird noted the school is installing a shed for storage, in the rear-yard. He noted the rear-yard in this case is along Day Spring Lane. Bird clarified the shed meets the accessory structure zoning code but is in the C-3 District and requires review.

Motion by Zook and second by Thompson to recommend approval of the installation of a prefabricated storage shed for the Montessori School in the rear-yard.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design review re: 300 West Water Street, *Zook / Blue Heron Building, new front windows*

Bird noted the owners of this building have already installed the windows, not thinking of the C-3 application and review process. They were apologetic and submitted the application explaining the nature of the new windows, as being more aesthetically pleasing and energy efficient.

Motion by Massman and second by Essa to recommend approval of the installation of new building front windows for the building at 300 West Water Street.

Roll call vote: Ayes, Massman, Essa, Delaney, Clark, Thompson.

Abstain: Zook.

Motion passed.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design review re: 307 West Water Street, *Your Place, new and replacement signs*

Bird noted the new owners are proposing new signs on this establishment. The signs have been reviewed by the Preservation Commission and recommended for approval by that commission. Bird also noted the signs appear to meet zoning code for the C-3 District.

Motion by Zook and second by Delaney to recommend approval of the new and replacement signs at Your Place at 307 West Water Street.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Consider repeal of previous site plan submittals for 105 St. Lawrence Street, *Quandahl Investment Properties, LLC, multi-family residential unit*

Bird asked the Commission to consider whether they would prefer to repeal previous site plans for this project or consider keeping the current site plan active. In discussion, the commission agreed to set this action item aside and keep the current site plan active for future consideration.

Consider a Site Plan Review re: 105 St. Lawrence Street, *Quandahl Investment Properties, LLC, multi-family residential unit*

Kole and Dexter Quandahl presented a site plan that removes as many of the adjoining neighbor's arguments as they could reasonably address. This site plan provides a combination of garage spaces and parking lot – off street parking.

Dexter noted he would consider either option, he noted they wanted to present a good quality project and offer affordable housing in the community.

Massman noted it appears the Quandahls are certainly trying to work with the neighbors.

Kole noted the plan doesn't minimize overall parking but minimizes driveway use.

Kole noted this plan offers a more "run of the mill" look and side elevations. This layout just doesn't offer much for variety and artistic design.

Thompson asked about the garage layout and there was conversation by Kole that the unit leases would dictate which garages and parking spaces would go with which unit.

Thompson noted he liked the reduced use of driveways.

Delaney asked about potential conflicts with the Washington Street Apartments' parking. Kole noted each parking lot would have five feet setback, so there would be a total of ten feet separating parking. Bird noted some landscaping would also help with separation.

Clarke noted this project will add needed affordable housing.

Motion by Clark and second by Essa to recommend approval of the 105 St. Lawrence multi-family site plan and present to City Council.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Discussion and possible action on code amendment; shipping containers ordinance

Bird presented an edited copy of a draft ordinance that regulates the use of shipping containers, especially in residential districts. He noted some edits had been made as a result of commission discussion during the June meeting. Bird also noted he had discovered other examples of such ordinances and he provided them to the commission for review.

In general discussion, Thompson questioned the need for this regulation.

Delaney liked the fact the City seemed to be proactive regarding this regulation, he also likes the permitting process outlined in the code.

Clarke noted if proper maintenance and upkeep were performed on the containers it would be a better situation.

Zook noted he didn't believe the City is missing out on development if there are regulations prohibiting such containers.

Delaney closed by stating he supporting having a code regulating their use but wanted more time to study and think on the issue.

Discussion and possible action on code amendment; loading and parking spaces ordinance amendments

Bird opened discussion on parking requirements as part of the zoning code. He noted the commission has been talking, anecdotally, about parking as part of the zoning code for some time. He mentioned the Menards and Echo Development projects as previous parking issues under review at the time.

Zook noted the references provided are minimums and developers certainly can do more than minimally required.

Thompson wondered if there could be incentive tied to reduced parking spaces. If a developer put in storm water reductions, they could have less parking spaces required.

There was also conversation about what is allowed to be parked in off-street parking, such as campers. Bird reminded the commission there are other code sections that regulate "what", such as property maintenance codes.

The commission agreed to keep a conversation going and wanted to review the City's sustainability codes as well.

Discussion and possible action on code amendment; residential definitions, dwellings, room houses, boarding houses

Bird noted he was recommending changes in the residential zoning to aid and align with the new short-term rental codes.

The commission agreed to continue to review suggestions in these code sections.

Other business

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07pm

Respectfully submitted,



Chad A. Bird
City Manager
Zoning Administrator